

# Oscar wilde's use of satire in the importance of being earnest assignment

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Oscar Wilde's use of satire in *The Importance of Being Earnest* "Ignorance is like an exotic fruit..." writes Oscar Wilde as he sets the literary table with a rich display of Victorian satire (Wilde). Born in Dublin to affluent parents, Wilde experienced a social advantage that gave him more than a taste of indulgent upper class life to ridicule. He attended Oxford on a scholarship and was considered a genius. Wilde was characterized as humorous, frank, and showy. Writing novels, poems, and essays as well, *The Importance of Being Earnest* was his most popular work.

Oscar Wilde uses satire to ridicule Victorian concepts of earnestness, marriage, and female independence. In the play, Wilde satirizes Earnest to mean more than just a name. The name is pun by itself (Moss). The characters, sober Jack and blithe Algornon, are thrown into the same title (Moss). Earnestness was a good, wanted quality of the Victorian time (Moss). Earnest means to be intellectual, to have deep thoughts, and to question things such as life. Earnest people are clear-headed and serious (Moss). It is ironic that two childish ladies, Gwendolen and Cecily, would long for a man named Earnest. It has always been a girlish dream of mine to love someone whose name was Earnest. There is something in that name that seems to inspire absolute confidence," admits Cecily (Wilde). Cecily bases her standards for a relationship on a name. Algornon is also caught-up in the Victorian "dream" of being Earnest (Moss). When Jack tells the truth of his name being Jack, Algornon replies very shocked with, "You answer to the name of Earnest. You look like an Earnest. You are the most Earnest-looking person I ever saw in my life"(Wilde). Algornon characterizes his personality to his title, "Earnest. Shockingly, Earnest does not only mean intellectual. It

also takes the definition of homosexual. To "love in Earnest" also means to love someone of the same sex (Moss). "He may even have taken a secret pleasure in perpetrating this esoteric pun on a largely unsuspecting Victorian audience" (Moss 180). The irony of this definition is that the couples in the end are of the opposite sex (Moss). Marriage is also satirized in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Picking a mate was very important to these men because their wife's financial status became their's after marriage.

This hints that the Victorian time was not a romantic period (Moss). "I really don't see anything romantic in proposing," stated Algernon (Wilde). Flirting and proposing is uncommon and abnormal to him. "She will place me next Mary Farquhar, who always flirts with her own husband across the dinner table," Algernon. Algernon's thoughts on marriage are viewed to be miserable (Reinert). The ladies associate the name with the idea. Earnest is only for the look. In order to live up to the social expectations, Jack pretends to be named Earnest (Sandie). You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter - a girl brought up with the utmost of care - to marry into a cloak-room, and form an alliance with a parcel. Good Morning Mr. Worthing!" Mrs. Bracknell (Wilde). His care and love for Gwendolen does not matter, only his money and social status.

Algernon and Cecily have plans of being wed. Lady Bracknell would not allow this until she finds out Cecily has a lot of money to her name (Becnel). Lady Bracknell believes marriage is first about money and society status and second for superiority in the relationship (Mullen). An engagement should come on a young girl as a surprise, pleasant or unpleasant, as the case may be," Lady Bracknell (Wilde). Love is nowhere in the picture for marriage.

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Through the characters of Gwendolen and Cecily, Wilde satirizes female independence. Wilde keeps in mind the changing status of women during the Victorian time (Schmict). A " new woman" came about; They did not want to stay home and be mothers and wives any longer, but wanted to branch out and have careers (Moss). A perfect example of this " new woman" is Gwendolen and Cecily.

Both girls are well-educated and just as sharp as the men (Mullen). Cecily seems to be an innocent country girl and Gwendolen is thought to be an upper class town woman. Their true colors shine through when they think they are engaged to the same man. " When I see a spade I call it a spade," says Cecily during a boiling fight with Gwendolen (Wilde). They were quick to switch gender roles in the fight for dominance. Another point of satirize female independence is the legal age of Cecily. Jack is said to have Cecily as his ward till she has reached the age of thirty-five (Mullen).

This ridiculous rule is clearly outrageous. Algornon saves her from this rule with the loop hole of marriage. Cecily woos Algoron into loving her with her beauty. " I don't seem to care about anything anymore... I only care for you. I love you Cecily. Will you marry me? " asked Algornon to Cecily (Wilde). Marriage to Algornon will save her from the whole thirty-five year ward-ship. Female independence, marriage, and Earnestness are all the main concepts satirize in The Importance of Being Earnest. Oscar Wilde ridicules Victorian times in his play.

To help develop his concepts he uses his frank and humorous personality. His farce mocks Victorian lifestyle in a humorous way. Works Cited 1. Becnel, <https://assignbuster.com/oscar-wildes-use-of-satire-in-the-importance-of-being-earnest-assignment/>

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